

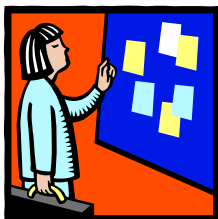
# THE SSA NEWS

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## Coming Soon!

- The 6th Annual Building Collaboratives Mobilizing Communities Conference, May 15, 2003



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR by Angelo Doti

Greetings, Colleagues! I know so many of you and I hope to get to know more of you in the coming months. All of us make up the SSA team in our diverse service delivery systems. Believe it or not, we become more intertwined as lines between our respective roles increasingly change (or blur) and do so rapidly.

Let me say from the outset that following Larry Leaman, SSA's Director for 21 years, is the proverbial "hard act to follow." His farewell message in the last newsletter was typical Larry – folksy and understating his many accomplishments. We wish him well.

Perhaps a few words about my background. After over 22 years with the Los Angeles County Public Social Services Department, Larry appointed me as Director of the then-SSA

Financial Assistance Division in 1987. Temporarily serving as the Welfare Reform planner following the enactment of PRWORA '96, I served as Director of Family Self-Sufficiency, recently Chief Deputy Director, and now Interim Director. (I hope to shed that "interim" label very soon.)

Over the years, we have been goal-oriented as you will note from our ever-evolving Business Plan and subsequent financial plan. We would hope that our programs would drive our budget, but in this unprecedented era of national and state budget uncertainty, we fear our program priorities are held captive by powers beyond agency or county control. We can all follow the unfolding events as the State grapples with its record deficits and the fiscal pain the State will share

with us. Since over 90% of our total budget is comprised of Federal and State funding, then as the State goes, so will we. Discussions of Realignment, VLF, sales and income taxes and other transfers or impositions are now before us daily. These deliberations will continue until a final State and County budget are adopted and then implemented. (No doubt after the constitutional deadline for a State budget.)

We are as fully involved in those financial deliberations as we can be, especially through our affiliation with the County Welfare Directors Association. I plan to keep you apprised of key events as they unfold. Meanwhile, let's keep focused on our collective mission of meeting our mandates to serve the residents of Orange County.

*“Any suggestions for accuracy improvement are welcome...”*

## SSA Tackles Food Stamp Payment Accuracy

Submitted by Ingrid Harita and Patsy Calvert

As SSA takes on the daunting task of radically improving our Food Stamp accuracy, various corrective action activities are underway. Each district office is participating in corrective action activities, which directly correlate to the needs of those districts.

In addition to the activities at the district offices, we have started other corrective action activities:

- West District, Adult Services and Assistance Programs, was selected to participate in an exciting new pilot to centralize and control the processing of CW7s. The purpose of this pilot is to allow additional time for workers to process CW7s by utilizing a specialized Unit Clerk who performs clerical functions relating to the CW7 process. This pilot is now in full operation. The outcome is being monitored closely and if successful, the pilot will be rolled out to another district office in the near future.
- In January we launched our first monthly Food Stamp survey. The survey process is paperless, and was sent and returned by email. Within a week, over 370 responses had been received and tabulated. The results will be used to determine training needs and identify the need for new or updated worker tools. The results of the survey will also be sent to all participants.

Other corrective action activities are planned for the future. Again, we encourage your commitment to improve our performance. Any suggestions for accuracy improvement are welcome, so please do not hesitate to bring those ideas forward.

*“I am so lucky that my job in SSA has afforded me the opportunity to ‘pay it forward’ by spreading the word about useful resources in my community.”*

## Being Prepared to Help Outside the Office

I work as an Eligibility Technician in the Social Services Agency, but I also work a second job in the office of a large apartment complex. Recently, I was asked to serve one of the tenants with a notice to pay rent or quit. I could see that the woman who answered the door was distraught and not well. We spoke, and during the course of our conversation she admitted to me that she had been in a domestic violence situation, and that her boyfriend had recently left her with no food or money. Her parents had disowned her, she had started drinking, and eventually she lost her job. I was able to refer this woman to

agencies that helped her with her past due rent, drinking and depression, childcare needs and finding a new job. She was also able to get food for her kids, credit counseling and legal aid. She eventually moved closer to her sister and got a job. This woman avoided an eviction on her record and left the apartment complex happier and stronger, with hope for the future.

This is an example of the everyday life of a real person that I was able to help due to my background and experience in SSA and with other agencies and charities. What helped me is the notebook I had put together for my SSA job which I keep at my

desk. It contains categories for resources that clients seem to need most. I have now made a copy of this notebook that I keep at home. In these difficult economic times, it is nice to give a phone number or address to someone in need. I am so lucky that my job in SSA has afforded me the opportunity to “pay it forward” by spreading the word about useful resources in my community.

(Jacki Livingston is an Eligibility Technician at the Medi-Cal Services Regional Center District Office in the Adult Services and Assistance Programs Division.)

## Mentorship Program at Children and Family Services Continues to Grow

The Mentorship program at Children and Family Services has continued to expand! The goal of the program is to provide support and encourage employees to promote within the agency as well as improve overall retention of social work staff. Also, Spanish-speaking mentors have been paired with English-speaking Senior Social Workers who are enrolled in the Berlitz Spanish courses with the goal of improving their

language skills. Our site support staff have also been included in this effort and are paired with employees interested in improving computer skills.

Many of our Senior Social Services Supervisors and Program Managers have attended the Mentorship Training and have agreed to mentor newly promoted Senior Social Services Supervisors or a Senior Social Worker wishing to

promote. We would like to thank the new Mentors that have made a one-year commitment to be paired with a protégé and assist the employee in their career development goals. If you are a Children and Family Services employee and interested in becoming involved in the Mentorship Program, please contact Joanne Munro, Marriage and Family Therapist, at 245-6035.

*“The goal of the program is to provide support and encourage employees to promote within the agency as well as improve overall retention of social work staff.”*

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Time Limits

The five-year time limit on CalWORKs cash aid began when the program was implemented in January 1998. The Welfare-to-Work program was created, as part of the CalWORKs program, with the goal of assisting recipients in seeking, obtaining and maintaining employment that leads to self-sufficiency. Working directly with clients, caseworkers assessed the individual's education, experience, and skills to determine the appropriate Welfare-To-Work activities in which the client would participate. Staff also identified barriers to self-sufficiency and provided resources to overcome these barriers. The programs and services provided must have worked because the CalWORKs caseload declined from approximately 30,000 cases in 1998 to less than 20,000 today! Due to the success of the program, many CalWORKs recipients are working and continue to receive benefits.

During 2003, 3,700 adults who had been aided in 2,650 CalWORKs cases will reach their time limits. The majority of these cases and persons reached their CalWORKs time limit in January. Effective January 2003, CalWORKs benefits ended for about 1,500 adults who had been on CalWORKs cash aid for 60 cumulative months. Cash aid continues under the Safety Net program that allows eligible children to continue to receive assistance.

Of the cases that have persons who will time expire in 2003:

- 64% of the adults within two-parent CalWORKs cases will reach their five-year time limit;
- 61% of the cases have a primary language of Vietnamese;
- 61% of the cases are assigned to the West district; and
- 52% of the cases have a parent(s) who works full time

Many of you contributed to the success of the CalWORKs program. Thanks to all of you who have worked so hard in this program. The goal of self-sufficiency has been reached by many who received the services you provided.

*“...CalWORKs caseload declined from approximately 30,000 cases in 1998 to less than 20,000 today!”*

We welcome your input regarding this newsletter. For information on submitting articles, contact Debbie Kroner at (714) 541-7734  
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[www.oc.ca.gov/ssa/](http://www.oc.ca.gov/ssa/)



- \* Articles for the March issue of The SSA NEWS are due by March 6, 2003!
- \* Please limit your articles to 225 words maximum and send them via email.  
 Thanks.



## KUDOS

### **Rick Bazant, Community Program Specialist, Orangewood Children's Home.**

"Dear Rick, a note to thank you and the donor for the two basketball tickets for the Clippers game last Sunday. You made it a very special occasion for a young man. We were able to arrange for his father to take him to the game - an exclusive father-son outing that rarely happens. The boy, his dad and I were elated." (Sent by Maury Jacques, CASA Advocate, submitted by Mike Ryan, Deputy Director, Children and Family Services.)

### **Mario Morales, Office Assistant, Adult Services & Assistance Programs.**

"Please accept our warmest thanks for hosting the August 19, 2002 blood drive and for supporting the American Red Cross. Due in large part to the efforts of Mario Morales, your blood drive coordinator, we were able to collect 42 pints of life-saving blood, which will make a vital difference for over 126 patients. We thank each and every participant as they have given another chance to patients and their families." (Sent by Molly Bounds, Donor Recruitment, American Red Cross, forwarded by Larry Leaman, Director, Social Services Agency.)

### **Thao Dang, Medi-Cal Continuing Worker, Santa Ana Regional Center.**

"The reason for this letter is to let you know that my social worker, Thao Dang is doing a wonderful job. I applied for Medi-Cal because I was diagnosed with leukemia. This is not the first time I have applied for Medi-Cal. But, this time I have to say that my social worker is a sensitive and responsible person that is not only is doing her job, but also at the same time she cares for her clients. She always returns my calls the same day. She remembers my illness and also asks questions about my family. She makes me feel that she cares, that I am not only papers to fill out or forms to be received. She always tries to speed up all the paperwork in order for me to continue with my treatment. I can say now that thanks to people like her the system is not so bad." (Letter sent by a client, forwarded by Raylene Casares, Senior Program Manager II, Adult Services & Assistance Programs.)

### **Rebecca Guider, Deputy Director, Adult Protective Services.**

"On behalf of the California State Coroners' Association and the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department, we would like to express our appreciation to you for your participation in this year's training. Your contribution to the presentation on "Elder Abuse" was a valuable addition to our agenda. Without speakers of your caliber our task of providing excellent continuing education would be daunting at best." (Sent by Donna Meyers, Staff Specialist/Training Coordinator, Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department, forwarded by Larry Leaman, Director, Social Services Agency.)

### **Fahim Nasraty, General Relief/Food Stamp Intake Eligibility Technician at Central Regional Office.**

"My ET, Fahim Nasraty, has been very helpful, polite and compassionate. He always is cheerful and very supportive. I wish to let you know he seems to be very dedicated to his clients and his work." (Sent by a client, forwarded by Dinah Torgerson, Assistant Program Manager, Adult Services & Assistance Programs, Central Regional Office.)

### **Sylvia Velasquez, Social Worker II, CalWORKS South.**

"I am a single mom, and I have been struggling off and on for years since my divorce. The typical ex-husband flaking on child support, no family to turn to and my career that suffers any time that my daughter is sick, or I have to run all the errands with no help. Mrs. Velasquez has taken the time to help me sort through things and guides me to immediate answers that have helped put my daughter and me on the right track. She has gone out of her way to check on me and to make sure that things are going as they should be. She has helped me see my self worth when I doubted it, and has made me feel that even though things are not in my control that I can still have an effective impact on them. I am now going to be off of cash assistance as of February 1, 2002 and I feel that part of that is because she helped me get things taken care of when I needed someone else's help." (Sent by a client, submitted by Brenda Roa, CalWORKS-South Regional Center District Manager, Family Self Sufficiency.)